



'You spin me right round' Using Blue to Close the Loop

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1. Background

About Birkbeck:

- London's Evening University
- 12,000 students
- High proportion of part-time students, high numbers of mature students
- Part of University of London
- 200-year anniversary approaching in 2023

Using Blue:

- Pilot project in Summer Term 2018/19
- Full roll-out Autumn Term 2019/20
- Bluepulse pilot for Autumn 2020/21



Previous module evaluation at Birkbeck

- Devolved processes and systems
- Varied between departments – some with 4-5 questions, some with 20-30
- Paper vs online debate
- Knowledge lost - unclear what happened with results, no longitudinal analysis.



Poll

- **Do you currently close the loop with your student reports?**
 - **Yes, we have integrated the process within Blue**
 - **Yes, we encourage teaching staff to close the loop, but the process isn't integrated within Blue**
 - **No, what is closing the loop?**



2. Current sector practice (Russell Group)

Research conducted 2019 on the Russell Group's module evaluation practices

- **Majority online only, but some institutions are moving back to paper due to response rate concerns (average response rate in 30-40% with online)**
- **Response rates range 30-40%**
- **Movement towards continuous feedback**
- **Quality enhancement vs quality assurance**
 - What's the main purpose of MEQs, and who is the main audience?
 - Quality enhancement for lecturers, or quality assurance for the institution?



2. Current sector practice (Russell Group)

- 17 have centralised policy that mandate or encourage a core questions are used in each module survey, or are working towards producing such policies;
- 4 institutions currently have no centralised system, MEQs are devolved to faculty level;
- 2 institutions had centralised MEQ processes, now moving towards ongoing feedback, using bespoke systems
- **Only 6 institutions have policies in place to close the loop.**



3. Closing the Loop at Birkbeck: Why

- **Ensure consistency in practice**
- **Ensure consistency in reporting**
- **Data, data, data**
 - Office for Students requirements to better understand the student experience, and to explain and eliminate differences between different demographics
- **Survey fatigue is a common worry in the sector and shown to impact response rate. Making it clear that the feedback provided by students does lead to changes is accepted as the most effective way of encouraging participation (Longcroft, 2015)**
- **Student voice and the drive to improve NSS results**



Closing the loop at Birkbeck: How

- **20 core questions, under the following headings:**
 - Module
 - Teaching (asked for each individual teacher or as group, chosen by department)
 - ****Online provision – added in Spring 2020****
 - Academic Support
 - Seminars
 - Feedback
- **Up to 5 departmental questions, consistent across the department**
- **Up to 3 module specific questions**
- **Individual tutor evaluation – department decision**
 - About half of departments chose to have individual tutor rankings
- **Surveys opens 7 days before final teaching event, closes at end of term**
 - Benefit that we can be more flexible than having a set survey time, but it makes communication more difficult



Closing the loop: How

With thanks to Dr Sarah Williamson at Loughborough University

- **When the evaluation survey closes, the results are sent to Module Convenor**
- **A new project is created in Blue which creates a task to complete 3 questions for Closing the Loop**
 1. Please summarise strengths identified in the student feedback
 2. For any question where the score is below 3.5, please identify what actions you intend to take the next time the module will run. If you do not think action is warranted, please explain why.
 3. For any other questions in which students have raised issues or suggestions, what actions do you intend to take next time. If you do not think action is warranted, please explain why.
- **Reports are sent to students, including the Closing the Loop answers. Reports are sent to students within 2 weeks of the report closing.**

Screenshot of Student Report with closing the loop responses

- Module convenor comments are added to the student reports
- If no response, the boxes state 'No comments received'

Overall



Module convenor comments

Please summarise strengths identified in the student feedback

Comments

It was evident that students enjoyed the experience of practical work, finding this interesting and enlightening. (The sessions are fun for those of us who teach them, too!) I will continue to try to refine the delivery of every session and enhance the supporting materials for these.

For any other questions in which students have raised issues or suggestions, what actions do you intend to take the next time. If you do not think action is warranted, please explain why.

Comments

Someone suggested adding some non-graded homework that might be reviewed in class and/or commented upon by the Instructor(s). This is a good idea and I have a plan to include something like this whereby students would also submit the work to Studiosity for general feedback on written material.

A couple of people commented that they did not find value in the Library Session(s). We will examine how better value may be added here. It might be better to do half-sessions on those evenings, with half in the lab and half in the Library.

For any question where the score is below 3.5, please identify what actions you intend to take the next time the module will run. If you do not think action is warranted, please explain why.

Comments

Scores on all all items were in the range 3.93–4.95, with an overall average of 4.35. This is gratifying and indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the module. I will do my best to retain this high standard for future cohorts.



Closing the Loop: Results

- **NSS Student Voice results**
 - I have had the right opportunity to provide feedback on my course – **Up 2%**
 - It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on – **No change**
 - Staff value students' views and opinions about the course – **Up 2%**
- **Not a massive improvement, but at least it is in the right direction**
- **Approximately 2/3rds of lecturers do add their comments**



Closing the Loop: thoughts and improvements

- **Setting up 2 projects works well**
- **Not all module convenors complete the closing the loop**
 - Consider whether giving more time to staff to complete the process would increase responses
 - But want to send the reports to students as soon as we can
- **Minimum threshold to send student report is 5 responses – high number of small modules, so threshold does mean many students do not receive the closing the loop reports**



Closing the Loop: next steps

- **Seek to automatically feed the responses automatically into annual reviews**
- **Seek feedback from students on the processes – to what extent do they actually read the Student Reports and are they useful**
- **Explore other ways to make the reports available eg to help with module selection**
- **Consider using mid-term surveys, and to trial BluePulse with departments who are keen to pilot.**



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